

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

11 February 2014

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: Sheila Griffin, Marjorie James and John Lauderdale.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2 (ii), Councillor Alison Lilley was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Kelly Atkinson.

Young People's Representatives:
Adam Davison and Matthew Streeting

Also present:
Sally Fixter, Living Streets Project

Officers: Gill Alexander, Director of Child and Adult Services
Sally Robinson, Assistant Director, Children's Services
Dean Jackson, Assistant Director, Education
Alastair Smith, Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services
Paul Watson, Road Safety Team Leader
Helen White, Participation Manager
Angela Armstrong Principal Democratic Services Officer

Prior to the commencement of business, Members stood in silence as a mark of respect following the recent death of Councillor Cath Hill.

101. Councillor Hill

The Chairman referred to the recent sad death of Councillor Hill and paid tribute to her for her work as Children's Services Portfolio Holder and previously during her distinguished career in the youth service.

102. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kelly Atkinson and Mary Fleet and co-opted member Michael Lee.

103. Declarations of Interest

None.

104. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2014

Received.

105. Living Streets – Walk to School Campaign *(Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with an update around the Living Streets Walk to School Campaign in the context of Hartlepool Borough Council's Road Safety and Sustainable Travel Service. To support the development of cross Directorate collaboration opportunities to achieve wider outcomes.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the Living Streets Walk to School Campaign and highlighted that Hartlepool Borough Council partnered with Living Streets in 2012 to increase the number of children walking to school. The engagement undertaken with schools and the intervention initiatives were outlined in the report. The report detailed a number of demonstrable benefits of Hartlepool's schools participating in the project. In conclusion it was noted that nationally, the Walk to School Outreach programme Year 1 project results had shown that walking rates increased from 54% before intervention to 68% five weeks later – equivalent to around 7,900 new pupils walking to school or 35 new walkers in each of the 210 primary schools.

A Member commented that this was an excellent initiative and worked very well. However, it was highlighted that obesity in young people was a major issue and it was therefore suggested that links with Public Health be established to generate resources for incentives such as security for bikes within school premises and therefore encourage more children and young people to walk or cycle to school. It was also suggested that young people may increase participation and get the message across to parents from within their schools about the wider benefits of this scheme. Further exploration should also be undertaken to enable children and young people

to be given the opportunity to secure funding from within the Living Streets Project for projects with a clear linkage to walking and cycling to school that they would like to see developed within their own schools.

One of the young representatives questioned what would be the motivation for young people to walk to school every day. The Road Safety Team Leader indicated that there were a number of ways that primary age children were incentivised using certificates and badges, however he questioned what the young people thought would incentivise teenagers. The young representative responded that within the secondary school he attended, a reward system was in place which included the gift of vouchers for the local cinema or restaurants was in place. The Living Streets Project Officer indicated that work was ongoing with some secondary schools including the use of financial incentives through the use of vouchers.

It was highlighted by the Living Streets Project Officer that work had been undertaken with Catcote School, a school where the majority of students were transported to school in cars, taxis or buses. The students wanted to take part in the project and suggested that opportunities to be more active during the school day be introduced and linked to the curriculum. This had resulted in a learning walk map being created which encouraged staff and students to use active travel during the day.

The Road Safety Team Leader and Living Streets Project Officer provided a presentation to the Committee which outlined the Project's links to the wider outcomes and the current projects being undertaken. The presentation highlighted a number of benefits to the implementation of the Walk to School Outreach programme.

One of the young people's representatives noted that parking by parents using cars to transport their children to school can create problems with parking around the school and suggested that safe car park drop off points be considered to alleviate this problem. The Road Safety Team Leader commented that this was an option that could be explored further and which had been implemented at St Theresa's Primary School with a safe car parking area being provided a 5 minute walk away from the school which alleviated the car parking problems for residents who lived around the school. The Chair commented that the car parking problems around Sacred Heart Primary School had recently improved and he suggested that the Road Safety Team Leader contact the Head Teacher of that school to find out how this had been achieved.

In response to a question from a Member, the Living Streets Project Officer confirmed that the Living Streets Project was a separate organisation to Sustrans but indicated that there was some partnership working ongoing with both organisations.

The Chair requested that further exploration be undertaken on the suggestion to establish links with Public Health and further develop incentives for students to participate in the Walk to School Outreach

programme.

Decision

- (i) The project and its outcomes were noted.
- (ii) The development of cross Directorate collaboration opportunities to achieve the wider outcomes was supported.
- (iii) That further exploration of establishing links with Public Health be undertaken to support the work being undertaken to reduce childhood obesity.

106. Shaping an Education Improvement Strategy for Hartlepool *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To set out proposals for the development of an Education Improvement Strategy for Hartlepool 2014-2017 and to provide the Children's Services Committee with the opportunity to comment on the initial priorities identified as part of the consultation process.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the updating of the Hartlepool Children and Young People's Plan 2013-16 and listed the key areas that needed to be taken into account. It was noted that the Local Authority was looking to redefine its strategic school improvement role and it was proposed that a Hartlepool Education Commission of no more than ten members be created to progress this. A key priority for the Commission would be to further develop the relationship between schools and colleges and the Local Authority. There were a number of key questions noted in the report that the Commission will be expected to address. The proposed detailed membership of the Commission was as follows:

- Chair of the Children's Services Committee
- Assistant Director, Education
- One secondary Headteacher
- Two primary Headteachers
- One special school Headteacher
- One primary school Governor
- One secondary school Governor

- One further education representative
- One Local Authority Education Division officer

A provisional timetable was detailed in the report and concluded with the presentation of the draft Hartlepool Education Improvement Strategy to the Children's Services Committee for approval in June/July 2014.

A detailed discussion took place on the membership of the Education Commission and a number of suggestions were made including the inclusion of the Vice Chair of the Children's Services Committee, a young persons' representative as well as the Director of Child and Adult Services. Further discussion ensued on the involvement of local colleges and businesses and the valuable input they would bring to the Commission. The Assistant Director, Education commented that the membership suggested had been based on a manageable level of members with further engagement being undertaken with colleges and leaders in business as well as the option to co-opt additional members as and when it was considered beneficial. However, the first meeting of the panel could consider further representation.

The Director of Child and Adult Services commented that it was important to start a wide and inclusive debate in Hartlepool about how to significantly improve the outcomes for young people and the ultimate measure of that was that young people should be able to compete for the best jobs and college and university places. The aim of this report was to commence this process as soon as practicable and to enable as many people as possible to contribute through a collective intelligence. The importance of consulting with business leaders and wider groups was reiterated to ensure the development of this Strategy was as inclusive as possible. The Chair commented that this was the first step in a longer term process to improve the education outcomes for young people.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Assistant Director, Education confirmed that the target to ensure all schools within Hartlepool were measured as good or outstanding by December 2015 remained in place.

During the discussions that followed, it was highlighted that the transition from primary to secondary was a major issue with a reduction in performance of pupils and this needed a forensic approach to find the reasons behind this.

It was suggested by a Member that the Head Teacher representatives from the primary sector should be selected on the basis that one representative be chosen from the North and Coastal area with one from the South and Central area of the town.

Decision

- (i) The report was noted.

- (ii) That a Hartlepool Education Commission be established.
- (iii) That the proposed constitution of the Commission be approved based on the core membership noted above with the inclusion of:
 - The Vice Chair of the Children's Services Committee
 - The Director of Child and Adult Services
 - A young persons' representative
- (iv) That Members' comments above on the initial priorities for the Commission be noted.
- (v) That the proposed timetable of meetings to enable the Commission to work towards devising the Hartlepool Education Improvement Strategy be approved with a further report to be submitted to the Committee in June/July 2014.

107. Constitution of Governing Bodies of Maintained Schools – Proposed Changes to Regulations *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To draw Members' attention to a consultation by the Department for Education (DfE) on proposed changes to the regulations and guidance that govern the constitution of governing bodies in maintained schools and federations of maintained schools in England. (These proposals do not apply to academies). The consultation was launched on 13 January 2014 and will close on 14 March 2014.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the proposed changes and the ongoing consultation. Details of the new stipulations around the make-up of Governing Bodies when they were constituted were included in the report. The DfE had issued a draft statutory guidance to accompany the revised regulations and the report set out the key points which reflected the proposed governance arrangements. It was noted that the new regulations come into effect in September 2014 and governing bodies will have until September 2015 to re-constitute under the 2012 Constitution Regulations, as amended.

A lengthy discussion took place during which Members reiterated the importance of having Local Authority appointed Governors on governing bodies and were disappointed that the changes to the regulations enabled individual schools to reject the nomination of individual Local Authority Governors should they so wish. In addition, there was concern expressed

by Members that Head Teachers who were part of their school's governing body would have a conflict of interest in relation to challenging and supporting themselves as leader of a school. It was suggested that a better approach would be that the Head Teacher was not part of the governing body, but reported to the governors to enable appropriate challenge and support to be in place.

The Chair requested that clarification be sought on the responsibility of the Local Authority to endorse the numbers and make-up of each governing body and whether this responsibility would rest with the Children's Services Committee.

Members thanked Officers for the excellent training programme that was in place for school governors which had been very well attended. It was suggested by a Member that whether this training could be accredited should be explored with a view to providing the training to other Local Authorities and their schools.

Decision

- (i) The report was noted.
- (ii) That Members' comments in relation to the appointment of Local Authority Governors to governing bodies and the possible conflict of interest should Head Teachers be included within the membership of their school's governing body be included within the response to the consultation.
- (iii) That clarification be sought on where the responsibility to endorse the numbers and make-up of each governing body should rest within the Local Authority.
- (iv) That the proposal to provide accredited training the school governors be explored further.

106. Proposals for Inclusion in Council Plan 2014/15 (*Child and Adults Departmental Management Team*)

Type of decision

Non key.

Purpose of report

To provide the opportunity for the Children's Services Committee to consider the proposals for inclusion in the 2014/15 Council Plan that fall under the remit of that Committee.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the review of the Outcome Framework which was to be implemented from April 2014. As in previous years, detailed proposals were considered by each Committee throughout January and February in respect of their areas of responsibility and a further report would be submitted to the Committee on 27 February detailing the comments/observations made by those Committees along with a full draft of the 2014/15 Council Plan.

The Assistant Director, Children's Services and Assistant Director, Education provided a short presentation which detailed the key challenges that the Council faced over the next year and beyond, set out the proposals from the Departments and how these will be addressed. The outcomes that fall under the remit of the Children's Services Committee from the Child and Adult Services Departmental Plan were outlined in the report.

A Member reiterated her previous concerns that the welfare reform changes were affecting families and was pleased to note that this was being addressed as part of the Council Plan as part of Outcome 6: Fewer Hartlepool children experience the effects of poverty.

Decision

The proposed outcome templates (Appendix A) were agreed for inclusion within the 2014/15 Council Plan.

108. Achievement of Pupils Eligible for the Pupil Premium *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To update the Children's Services Committee Members on the achievement of pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium over the period 2011/13 in Hartlepool primary and secondary schools.

The report provided details on pupils in receipt of the pupil premium in Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the introduction of the pupil premium in April 2011. The pupil attainment can be analysed by comparing the average points score (APS) for each of reading, writing and mathematics for both the pupil premium cohort and the non pupil premium cohort. The pupil attainment for Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 were detailed in the report. Further explanation of the pupil progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 2 to 4 was also included within the report.

During the discussions that followed, it was highlighted that any additional resources achieved through the pupil premium inevitably benefitted the whole class and therefore improved the overall standard and quality of attainment.

A Member reiterated her concerns that some children who were living within a level of child poverty only received a hot meal whilst attending school and asked for consideration to be given to encouraging schools to remain open during school holidays to ensure children received at least one meal during the day. Another Member highlighted that one of the primary schools in the town had a food bank within its premises and parents regularly asked for food to feed their families.

Decision

The contents of the report were noted.

109. Fostering Service Quarterly Report 1 October 213 – 31 December 2013 *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To provide the Children's Services Committee with information relating to the activity of the Fostering Service for the third quarter of 2013/14. The Fostering Service is a regulated service and as such, there is a requirement to provide Members of the Council with performance information on a quarterly basis.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the quarterly reporting of the activity of the Fostering Service. It was noted that the Fostering Team was now fully staffed and continued to benefit from the continued partial support of an Agency Worker. In relation to the recruitment and retention of foster carers, it was highlighted that there were currently 99 foster carers providing placements for 201 children which represented an increase of four foster carers and 29 children and young people since the previous quarter. A programme of recruitment activity had taken place in the third quarter of 2013/14 and this was detailed in the report. A number of training courses were made available to foster carers and these were listed in the report. Further information was included in the report outlining the following areas:

- Family Placement Panel Activity
- Family Finding Good Practice
- Child Appreciation Day
- Edge of Care Scheme

It was noted that the Fostering Service had been part of the OFSTED inspection of Children's Services in November 2013 and further details on this was provided later in the meeting.

The Chair was pleased to note that the report demonstrated how well the Local Authority looked after the Looked After Children.

Decision

The report in relation to the work of the Fostering Service in the third quarter of 2013/14 was noted.

110. Adoption Scorecards *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To inform Children's Services Committee of the department performance in relation to Department of Education Adoption Reforms – Scorecards 2012-2013.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the introduction of the Adoption Scorecards which were published annually detailed local authority performance around adoption. The report included detailed performance information and the Assistant Director, Children's Services highlighted that the threshold for the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family for children who have been adopted was 20 months with Hartlepool's performance for 2010-2013 being 15.4 months. This put Hartlepool at the top of its statistical neighbour group. In addition, the threshold for the average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and matching the child with an adoptive family was 6 months, with Hartlepool's performance for 2010-2013 being 4.5 months. This put Hartlepool 3rd within its statistical neighbour group.

The Chair was pleased to note the good performance levels of the adoption team and asked for the Committee's appreciation to be passed onto the team for consistently performing well.

Decision

The Council's performance in relation to the Adoption Scorecard was noted.

111. Framework and Evaluation Schedule for the Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers *(Assistant Director, Children's Services)*

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To inform Children's Services Committee of the inspection of Local Authority children's services which took place in November/December 2013.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided the background to the inspections that were carried out under section 136(2) of the Education and Inspection Act 2006. On 19 November 2013, notice was received of an inspection of Children's

Services which commenced on 20 November 2013 and concluded on 11 December 2013. During the inspection, eight inspectors were involved in the process and the scope of the inspection considered a number of areas of practice and these were listed in the report.

Initial feedback on the outcome of the inspection had been provided to the Local Authority at the end of the inspection period. The final report was awaited and was published on the OFSTED website on 11 February 2014. Copies of this report were tabled for Members' consideration. It was noted that the overall judgement was good, however the judgement for the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board was 'required improvement'.

The Director of Child and Adult Services confirmed that this had been a much more rigorous inspection than previously and that the general message was that Hartlepool provided a good, safe environment for children who needed extra help and support. The performance of Children's Services was highlighted as performing among the best in the country. Further details of the judgement were included in the Inspection Report and Members were informed that an action plan would be produced as a result of the inspection and submitted to Committee at a later date. The Director highlighted there were two pages of strengths and one page outlining areas for improvement which are already being tackled. This information had been shared with Cleveland Police and further work was being undertaken on engagement and information sharing. One of the key issues affecting the Local Safeguarding Children Board had been that just prior to the inspection, the Chair of the Board had resigned.

In conclusion, it was noted that the results of the inspection had been a good news story with a further inspection not expected for three years.

The Chair thanked Officers for their contribution to the Inspection and asked for Members' appreciation to be forwarded to all staff involved for achieving such an outstanding grading under the new and very rigorous inspection framework. The outcome of the Inspection confirmed Members' view that Hartlepool staff were totally committed to ensuring the safety of our young people.

Decision

The outcome of the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board was noted.

112. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The meeting concluded at 6.17 pm

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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